



3,000 years of civilization on display, from the origins to the Incas

MACHU PICCHU AND THE GOLDEN EMPIRES OF PERU

08.10.2022 – 19.02.2023



Starting Saturday, October 8th, 2022

MUDEC is taking its visitors through the marvellous tale of a multi-millennial civilization, thanks to a major exhibition:

MACHU PICCHU AND THE GOLDEN EMPIRES OF PERU. 3,000 years of civilization on display, from the origins to the Incas

To download the press kit and the pictures: <https://tinyurl.com/v7ccc9bm>

Mudec is offering its visitors a marvellous journey, from the origins to the apotheosis of the Incas Empire, thanks to the major exhibition project **“Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru. 3000 years of civilization on display, from the origins to the Incas.” starting Saturday, October 8th.**

Through multi-millennia-old artefacts, videos, immersive 3D reconstructions, and thanks to a set-up based on images rendering the idea of a real journey through time, the exhibition will take visitors back through the millennia and tell them the story of a glorious civilization, so ancient and remote that the general public generally knows only the last part: the most recent part of the story, made famous at the universal level by the discovery of the remains of Machu Picchu, the great sacred city.

But Peru's history begins way further back in time.



The exhibition - which will remain open to the public until **February 19th, 2023** - is sponsored by the **Comune di Milano-Cultura** (City of Milan-Culture) and organized by **World Heritage Exhibitions (Cityneon Holdings)** and **24 ORE Cultura**, in collaboration with the Government of Peru and the Ministry of Culture of Peru, the Inkatera Association, and thanks to the collaboration with **Museo Larco** in Lima, which provided the **more than 170 artefacts** on

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display. Moreover, the exhibition takes place under the **patronage** of the **Consulate General of Peru in Milan**, **ILIA** - International Italo-Latin American Organization and the **Cervantes Institute of Milan**.

The project, curated by **Ulla Holmquist**, director of the LARCO Museum in Lima and archaeologist **Carole Fraresso**, **is a journey through the Andean artistic history and biodiversity**, exploring its broad geographic dimension and chronological depth, and culminating in an ideal journey to the Inca city of Machu Picchu.

A selection of more than 170 amazingly beautiful artefacts is on display: terracotta works of great expressiveness and technical perfection, as well as gold and silver items and textiles. Part of the exhibition is devoted to an adventurous journey alongside the mythical **hero of the Moche Culture, Ai Apaec**: the visitors will discover the mysteries of **Andean cosmology**, moving through the **three planes of the universe**: the above, the here, and the below.

"Machu-Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru" in Milan is the exclusive Italian leg of an international tour.

AN EXHIBITION-NARRATIVE

The exhibition "Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru. 3,000 Years of Civilization on display, from the Origins to the Incas" is the narration of a story within History, a storytelling that unravels among immersive videos, 3-D reconstructions of different urban and environmental settings, marked by biodiversity, and, above all, artefacts: before becoming archaeological finds, these artefacts were jewellery, textiles, and garments, worn by men and women who lived fully in their own world and a society made up of laws and customs, knowledge and rituals, symbols and traditions, myths and legends. The exhibition tells the public the story of this world, which has vanished yet still speaks to our times.

The tour takes visitors into the cradle of one of the greatest ancient civilizations in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Peru of the ancient age is equalled only by Ancient Egypt in terms of longevity and by Rome from the point of view of the technical level attained by a civilization; **it was home to powerful and sophisticated societies**, that thrived for five thousand years, stretching over a **definitely diverse geographical area**. Peru and its history extend over an area stretching from the fertile coastline, kissed by the waters of the Pacific Ocean, through the rocky desert, to the icy Andean plateau (Altiplano Andino), then plunging into the tropical area of the Amazon Basin.

Nestled on a mountain ridge, shrouded in a cloud forest above the rainforest, the city of **Machu Picchu is the symbol** of the great **Inca Empire**, that still survives and whose sudden and violent end came with the Spanish Conquest of 1572.

Machu Picchu

The exhibition tour begins right at Machu Picchu, where the story starts from the end: the collapse of the great Andean kingdoms, told thanks to an immersive video that introduces the

lush Andean landscape. **Machu Picchu, the UNESCO cultural and natural heritage stone citadel** built in **1450**, at the height of the Inca Empire, and its extraordinary surroundings, are shown via aerial footage. Invisible from below, Machu Picchu is a fortress hidden in the cloud forest, protected by twin sacred mountains whose foot is rooted in the Amazon rainforest. A religious centre, astronomical observatory, and, in general, a place marked by inventiveness and a rich agricultural production, Machu Picchu is a complex structure consisting of more than 200 stone buildings: temples, palaces, "plazas" (open spaces), houses. Spared by the Spanish invasion, Machu Picchu was encompassed by the rainforest until Yale historian Hiram Bingham revealed it to the world in 1911.

Reading objects

The Amazon rainforest, with its voices and colours, is reconstructed, and the exhibition helps visitors to interpret, or "**read,**" **the objects on display**. Although they had no written language, men and women of Andean societies bore witness to the histories of the communities they belonged by using symbolic images, which are visible on temple walls, or stone carvings, wooden engravings, ceramic vessels, textiles, and gold and silver objects whose crafting is simply unique. **Objects are grouped according to their symbolic meaning**: these were the 'books' documenting these people's beliefs, rituals, world views, power structures, and community life.

Near the exit, **an impressive copper funerary mask**, with feline claws made of shells and snake-shaped ear ornaments, introduces the figure of the mythological hero, **Chief Ai Apaec**.

Ai Apaec's heroic journey

The journey of the mythological hero of the Moche Culture, Ai Apaec, is the focus of this part of the exhibition.

The head of a rural community, Ai Apaec was able to harness the forces of nature and go through a series of transformations that would allow him to cross different worlds, until the ultimate transformation, his own death. After being reborn, the hero will unite with Mother Earth, Pachamama, thus ensuring the continuity of the natural cycles that provide sun and rain, the elements necessary for life.

The images projected along the walls of this section of the exhibition give life to a real **'illustrated story'**, a path that tells the public with the immediacy of images not only the story of Ai Apaec, but also **the myths and the symbolic world** that represents the substratum on which the cultural universe of ancient Peru has been built over the centuries, and of which the religious, symbolic and mystery imagery of contemporary Peru is still strongly imbued today. Along the walls, projected images give a name to the **three worlds** that coexist simultaneously in **Andean cosmology**: the **World Above**; the **World of the Here and Now**, or Middle World, the place where people live and work in communities alongside animals, plants, rivers and mountains; and finally the **World Below**, the world of the ocean, the underground world, the land beneath our feet, on which rain falls and where seeds ripen, and, finally, the land of our ancestors, the place where people go when they die.

The encounters Ai Apaec makes and his experiences symbolize the challenges of the natural world that Andean men and women face in the Here and Now. **The story is based on the cornerstones of Andean cosmology:** the fact that it is necessary to give in order to receive and the importance of honouring ancestors, thanking the gods and working, making sacrifices and offerings to maintain the balance of natural cycles that make life possible.

Rituals: deer hunting and Sacrifice

The Andean world is based on reciprocity: **it is necessary to give in order to receive.** In order to preserve the continuity of natural cycles and the balance between the three worlds, **rituals** must be **performed, sacrifices made, and offerings brought to the gods.** A common ritual was **deer hunting.** The killing of these animals, to which great value was attached, and the ensuing ceremony were performed only by members of the society's elite, who took on the role of predators by channelling the power of felines.

The story is told via the projection of the ritual, as it was inferred from a stirrup vase, a find of paramount importance.

Rituals which took place in temples were strictly reserved for shamans and community leaders and were performed in places away from public view. The exhibits depict musicians and musical instruments. A large Nazca drum in the shape of a shaman has large eyes, that indicate a state of hallucination. A video explains that, as it was the case in many ancient cultures, such as Aztec, Celtic, Greek, Roman and other ancient civilizations, Andean communities practiced **human sacrifice.**

Visitors then proceed to **a space reproducing the interior of a temple,** where prisoners were prepared for **sacrifice** and altars were placed. During the ritual, warriors who had been defeated were bound with ropes and, as in the case of Ai Apaec, performed the ultimate sacrifice. The moment their throats were cut they became sacred beings. Their blood (the life-giving blood) was collected in cups and offered to the high priests, the representatives of the gods.

Meeting the ancestors

After walking under a snake-shaped arch, visitors enter a dark tunnel, illuminated by a radiant glow. A lavish display of gold, silver, copper, and gemstone artefacts, a pinnacle of artistry and talent, is set against the backdrop of a lush, green rainforest. This is the time devoted to the **ancestors**, whom the visitors see in the clothing in which they were buried. The lords, ladies, kings, queens, and emperors of the Andean world embodied the gods. The precious clothes and jewellery they wore symbolized what they were on this earth and what they could become after death. The political and religious leaders of the communities, the rulers, personified the forces that make life possible in this place of icy waters, arid deserts, and tropical rainforests. They were able to channel the power of the Sun, the Moon and the stars through silver and gold. The precious metals they wore were not chosen for their monetary value, but for what they represented to the entire community: gold was the sweat of the Sun and silver was the tears of the Moon. Metals were symbols of divine powers that legitimized the power of rulers. Shining

like heavenly bodies, leaders gave life a chance to flourish for the good of the entire community. When they died, they were buried wearing all the splendour of metals and they turned into supernatural beings.

Machu Picchu Today

Beyond the Gate of the Sun, a mural of Machu Picchu looms through the cloud forest. The visitors have now returned to the stone citadel of the Incas and re-entered the **21st century**. Some people involved in a **conservation project**, which began in 1975, describe their role and the impact of reforestation in this area. In several videos, shamans and members of contemporary Andean communities explain to the audience the importance and power of nature in life in the Andes, the value of Rite and its perpetuation in celebrations and rituals, even today.

The immersive experience

Finally, the exhibition offers the opportunity to experience - through an immersive room apart from the exhibition path - a **real flight simulation over the sacred city of Machu Picchu** that will stimulate the senses of sight, hearing and the sense of movement, through an integrated **virtual reality station with visual and sound VR movement**. It will thus be possible to experience the real, **'physical' sensation of flying over the remains of the Unesco Heritage Monument** and over the sacred mountains and the Amazon Rainforest with a virtual guide who will 'fly' with us, telling the story of this magical site, accompanying us on a real emotional journey.

The **exhibition catalogue** "Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru" published by 24 Ore Cultura, is available in the **exhibition bookshop**, in bookstores, and online.

The Mudec Palimpsest "The Year of Peru"

The exhibition "Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru" represents the culmination of what has already been defined "the golden year of Mudec", that is a wide-ranging cultural project that aims to tell the beautiful world of Peru over a period of almost a year and which takes shape through the very rich program palimpsest "The year of Peru", inaugurated in June 2022 to run until March 2023.

An unprecedented schedule of events and in-depth activities for the city of Milan, which accompanies the public in the museum spaces on a kaleidoscopic cultural journey through conferences, evening lectures with aperitifs, workshops and workshops, round tables, guided tours, artistic performances and conferences. Info at: www.mudec.it.

To download the pictures and the press kit: <https://tinyurl.com/v7ccc9bm>

USEFUL INFO:

MUDEC Via Tortona 56, tel. 02/54917 (Mon-Fri 10 a.m.-5 p.m.)

DATES 08/10 - 19/02/2023

OPENING TIMES

Mon 2:30-7:30 p.m. | Tue, Wed, Fri, Sun 9:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m. | Thu, Sat
9:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m.

TICKETS

Full € 16.50 | Reduced € 14 | Immersive experience € 15

Ticket service ends one hour before closing time.

PRESS OFFICES:

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